

Paradox of Political Realism: The Taiwanese and Chinese Perceptions on the Rise of China Compared

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Abstract

This article argues that given China's unique historical path of development, the realist tradition of international relations needs further revision and adjustments to suit the Chinese case. The Chinese interpretation of socialist ideology is based on political pragmatism instead of moral crusading. The Taiwanese are facing a rising China with caution and prudence. However, the center-periphery mentality of the Chinese side makes cross-strait negotiations on an equal footing less likely. Studying the value change in the Chinese domestic logic will help us understand the historical evolution of change and continuity in foreign policy making in the context of economic globalization and political struggling.

Keywords

Political realism, rise of China, cross-strait relations, political identity, cultural politics

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to review the essence of political realism in international relations and its application to the rise of China. This paper argues that in the era of globalization, history and culture still matter in the context of domestic linkages of foreign policy making. Competing explanations for the historical and cultural factors of development result in plural interpretations among Chinese academics. The instrumentalism of history and culture is especially salient in China's policies toward Taiwan. This paper tries to analyze and contrast leading Taiwanese and Chinese academic works, and delves into the cultural logic of the Chinese attitudes toward its new role in international society.

This paper will first redefine the realist tradition of international relations, along with its utilities in studying the rise of China. The second section will discuss

Taiwanese academic works on Chinese foreign policy and the rise of China, followed by different interpretations of mainland Chinese scholars about the Chinese position after the peaceful rise. The fourth section will focus on the instrumentalism of culture in Chinese foreign policy, as well as its application to cross-Taiwan Strait relations. The concluding section will discuss the prospect of refining the study of Chinese foreign policy in the cultural and historical context.

1. The political realism of international relations revisited

The traditional, power-centered realist tradition in international relations predicts the confrontation between the status quo hegemonic power and anti-status quo rising power. The “billiard ball” theory of realism disregards the domestic constellations and presumes that nations, regardless of regime types, will pursue the maximization of power. Against traditional wisdom, Jonathan Kirshner indicates that the eventual clashes of interest between the US and China have proven to be a myth of the structural realist scholars, such as John Mearsheimer. According to Mearsheimer, the rise of China is destined to coincide with the emergence of hegemony in the international system. Kirshner argues, by contrast, that being a hegemon is totally different from the bidding for hegemony.¹ In other words, the rise of material power only enhances the qualification for being a hegemonic power. It is the domestic political factors which determine the intention of the rising power to seek hegemonic status. I echo this argument and re-emphasize that domestic politics matters. The realist paradigm has multiple utilities, and the traditional interpretation does provide a fresh insight into the inside-out explanation of the rise of China.

The changes and continuities of political realism are rooted in the evolution of Chinese domestic politics. The transition of domestic governance models in China and Taiwan’s democratic developments over the past two decades has led to the shift of identity and value systems of these two political identities. These changes may create uncertainties and anxieties for foreign policy makers. In the process of searching for a new status as a major power, Chinese scholars are tracing back to traditional strategic thought and the classical international system when

¹ John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York, WW Norton, 2003); Jonathan Kirshner, “Tragedy of Offensive Realism: Classical Realism and the Rise of China”, *European Journal of International Relations*, 18-1 (August 2010): 1-23.

China considered itself to be the center of the world.² American scholars have also delved into the implications of classical cases when China was the center of the world and the “Confucian long peace” to the current international system.³ In other words, how to accommodate the new identity of a rising power with a long and glorious history and recent authoritarian legacy will be of interest both from a theoretical as well as a policy perspective.

In brief, by redefining classical realism of international relations, a thorough understanding of the rise of China must incorporate constructivist factors such as culture and identity into the analysis. Forces of globalization in culture, which serve as the most important external impetus to change domestic behavior, need to be integrated into the framework of analysis. I also firmly believe that history matters. As the classical work of E.H. Carr demonstrates, norms will not stop states from engaging in acts of barbaric aggression, but historical experiences and perceptions of legitimacy nevertheless condition the way in which states interpret the meaning of each other’s actions.⁴ Walter Mead once classified American foreign policy history into Hamiltonian, Wilsonian, Jeffersonian and Jacksonian traditions. These four schools of thought represent the tradition to maintain the health of American enterprises, the moral and practical duty to spread American values to the world, the preservation of American democracy, and promoting the culture of honor, independence, courage, and military pride.⁵ By the same token, the Chinese historical and culture evolution over the past two thousand years also sheds light on understanding the rise of China in the contemporary world.

Historical experiences have influential impacts on the current perceptions and misperceptions of the actors involved in the process of China’s rise. However, history does not necessarily serve as the only independent variable to determine the destined clashes of interests. Instead, the parties involved will undergo a “learning” or “socialization” process that will help them adjust and accommodate one another in the long-term historical trajectory. Some critical junctures and major events in history are important to understand the socialization and learning experiences.

² Xuetong Yan, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

³ Brantly Womack, *China’s Rise in Historical Perspective* (New York: Roman and Littlefield, 2010); David Kang, *East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

⁴ Edward H. Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939* (New York: Perennial, 2001).

⁵ Walter Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002); John Ikenberry, Thomas Knock, Anne-Marie Slaughter, & Tony Smith, eds., *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy: Wilsonianism in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

The major advantage of the domestic interpretation of power politics is to grasp the potential of “governing” instead of “balancing” international power distribution. Even the hard-core realists do not reject the possibility of social learning and socialization in international society. The learning process also reflects the change of state behaviors with respect to contingency maneuvering, compromise, and ideological adjustments. Through the lens of historical learning and socialization, researchers will understand the changes of identity and the impacts on developing national interests. Scholars like Alex Wednt, Peter Katzenstein, and Jeffery Legro focus their studies on the interaction among institutions, culture, and identity.⁶ History may shift the direction of a power constellation, but history per se is also the result of human construction and power manipulation. A persuasive discussion on the governance of power relations is rooted in the thorough understanding of the historical process of identity formation.

New forces of globalization create the dynamism of people-to-people cooperation. Such dynamism also helps states to escape from the hard-core, power struggle-centered approach to foreign policy, and return to the original spirit of realism to balance morality, power, and capacities. However, culture also serves as a type of “tool kit” from which decision makers can pick certain instruments to aid their political purposes. Through the non-state dimension of power management, mutual trust and avoidance of misperception could be realized in the framework of global governance. According to Edmund Gullion, public diplomacy includes such activities as educational exchange programs for scholars and students, visitor programs, language training, cultural events and exchanges and so on. Such activities usually focus on improving the “sending” country’s image or reputation as a way to shape the wider policy environment in the “receiving” country. Public diplomacy differs from traditional diplomacy in that public diplomacy deals not with governments but instead primarily with non-governmental individuals and organizations.

As the preceding statement demonstrates, the revised realist approach integrates history, culture and identity into a macro-analytical framework. Political leadership serves as a bridge to link domestic and international politics. The dynamics of this approach are embedded in a globalizing world characterized by forces of institutional change, ideological evolution, and interest adjustment. The instrumentalism of culture and public diplomacy also serves as a major vehicle to enhance bottom-up forces of mutual understanding.

The application of the realist tradition to Chinese foreign policy and the rise of

⁶ Peter J. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

China could be demonstrated in the analyses of the Beijing-Washington-Taipei triangle. In his article on the “Finlandization” of Taiwan, Bruce Gilley argues that Taiwan should reposition itself as a neutral power, rather than a strategic ally of the US. Gilley argues that from a strictly realist perspective, there is no need for the United States to keep Taiwan within its strategic orbit, given that US military security can be attained through other Asian bases and operations. Taiwan’s Finlandization should be seen not as a necessary sacrifice to a rising China but rather as an alternative strategy for pacifying China.⁷

A more straightforward hard-core realist interpretation of major power politics across the Taiwan Strait can be found in Charles Glaser’s arguments. Glaser argues that the United States should consider backing away from its commitments to Taiwan. This would remove the most obvious and contentious flashpoint between the United States and China and smooth the way for better relations between them in the decades to come.⁸ Senior American scholar Zbigniew Brzezinski also argues that any long-term US-Chinese accommodation will have to address the fact that a separate Taiwan, protected indefinitely by US arms sales, will provoke Chinese hostility. Regardless of the exact formula, given China’s growing power and the greatly expanding social links between Taiwan and the mainland, it is doubtful that Taiwan can indefinitely avoid a more formal connection with China.⁹

On the other hand, the bilateral relationship between the US and China is also full of suspicion and contradictions. Some US experts have argued that the recent assertive policies of Beijing are reflective of the shift of China’s grand strategy. More moderate scholars argue that Chinese policies toward the US are just “reactive and conservative.” For instance, according to Thomas Christensen, current Chinese policy makers are hypersensitive to nationalist criticism at home and more rigid at times in response to perceived challenges from abroad. The US policy should focus on persuasion instead of containment.¹⁰

For the Chinese perception of its international position after the rise of China, a victim’s mentality and the memory of a century of foreign humiliation has helped give rise to modern Chinese nationalism toward the West. However, the Chinese side also alleges that China is playing a positive role in international affairs and maintaining the international status quo. To Chinese policy makers, China is already a great power with a high position and great influence; there

⁷ Bruce Gilley, “Not so dire straits,” *Foreign Affairs*, 89-1 (Jan/Feb 2010), pp. 44-60.

⁸ Charles Glaser, “Will China’s Rise Lead to War? Why Realism Does Not Mean Pessimism,” *Foreign Affairs*, 90-2 (Mar/Apr 2011): 80-92. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).

⁹ Zbigniew Brzezinski (2012).

¹⁰ Thomas Christensen, *Grand Strategy, domestic mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

is no demand by the Chinese for such a position or influence as it increases its capabilities.¹¹ Wang Jisi, a leading Chinese scholar on international affairs, argues that China's major geo-strategic focus is still Asia. Under the concept of "building a harmonious society," the Chinese government emphasizes a comprehensive understanding of security, participating in multi-lateral issues, sustainable development, and a new culture value of good governance and transparency.¹²

2. The Rise of China: The Taiwanese Scholarly Interpretations

This section will first focus on the major approaches and themes of Taiwanese scholarly works, especially in the field of international relations, on the new role of China in the international arena. Trained in Western social science approaches, most Taiwanese scholars attempt to link the study of the rise of China with the international relations theories in the Western world. Some scholars attempt to adopt a more critical approach to review the sources of change and continuity of Chinese foreign relations. For instance, Lang Kao launches a criticism on the American-centered perceptions on the rise of China. Kao acknowledges the importance of Deng Xiaoping's design for domestic reforms as the foundation of understanding Chinese foreign policy. The rise of China is the reflection of the political logic of China's elite leaders. It is a careful calculation, according to Kao, of the Chinese leadership on their estimation of the international situation and domestic needs to deepen the market transition in China. Such calculations are rooted in the collective wisdom dating back to the pre-reform era. Pure materialist measurements on the Chinese capacities without incorporating historical lessons and memories will be missing a big piece of puzzle.¹³ However, Kao does not indicate what exactly the historical logic is, and what kind of lesson will be reflected in contemporary Chinese policies in the global arena.

Chih-yu Shih and Teng-chi Chang adopt psychological approaches to review four key concepts of the rise of China, namely, the nature of the Chinese nation state, Tianxia (天下), Chinese civilization, and Asian dynamism. According to Shih and Chang, these four dimensions provide a more comprehensive framework to understand the rise of China in the contemporary world than the Western

¹¹ Tsinghua University, *Tsinghua Report: The Rise of China's Power and International Role* (Beijing: Tsinghua University, 2009).

¹² Jisi Wang, "China's Search for a Grand Strategy: A Rising Great Power Finds Its Way," *Foreign Affairs*, 90-2 (March/April 2011): 68-80.

¹³ Lang Kao, "Ruhe lijie zhongguo jueqi [How to understand the rise of China]" *Yuanjing jikan* [Future China], 7-2 (April 2006): 53-94.

power-centered approaches of realism. Shih and Chang provide a unique analysis on the concept of Tianxia and its implication for the rise of China. Echoing the original interpretation of Tianxia from the Chinese scholar Zhao Dingyang, Shih and Chang argue that the concept of Tianxia provides a different interpretation of the Westphalian tradition of international systems. In addition to the explanation of the international hierarchy and ranking system, Shih and Chang stress the flexibility of borders between states. Since Tianxia is an abstract but comprehensive concept, this system puts emphasis on cultural learning instead of power balancing.

However, Shih and Chang are skeptical about the contemporary application of the Tianxia concept on the rise of China. They argue that in a “harmonious world system” as China has been advocating recently, the Chinese regard virtues such as adopting a low profile and being modest as instruments of the state to achieve higher goals of national pride and sovereignty. The instrumentalism will be transferred into sources of national power and contingency in the international system. By doing so, China’s policy of a “harmonious world” will be utilized to buttress the nation state in the jungle of power politics. The culture-based Chinese soft power will also be developed to satisfy the market demands dominated by the West world. Ironically, the current Chinese leadership’s promotion of a “harmonious world” and “soft power” distorts the concept of Tianxia and leads the nation into the Westphalian system of nation states and power politics.¹⁴

Whether the rise of China will bring instability in the international system is also a major concern of Taiwanese scholars. Yu-shan Wu’s study on power transition theory sheds light on the flexibility and constraints of a stable international system after the rise of China. According to Wu, stabilizing either the process of power transition or intentions after China gains its new status in the international system may decrease the possibility of war. In the context of Sino-American relations, US foreign policy efforts to change the Chinese perception and intention on the issue of Taiwan to a more flexible position will be the key to avoid clashes of the two major powers. Furthermore, if international institutions provide enough space for interest engagements and articulation, the Chinese will accommodate international norms and values and this will eventually result in the peaceful resolution on the Taiwan issue. However, as Wu indicates, domestic politics and the impact of culture will constrain the willingness of existing powers to “open the door” to accommodate the new role of China in the international system.¹⁵

¹⁴ Chihyu Shih & Tengchi Chang, “Zhongguo jueqi de yiyi [The meaning of the rise of China], *Wenhua Yanjiu* [Research of Culture], Vol. 8 (Spring 2009): 193-212.

¹⁵ Yushan Wu, “Quanli yizhuan lilun: beiju yuyan?” [Power transition theory: the prophet f

Recently, there have been noteworthy efforts by Taiwanese academics to use constructivism in analyzing international relations in China. Adopting the constructivist approach, Taiwanese scholars try to analyze the changes and continuity of the Chinese identity from “a third party role.” In general, these Taiwanese academics take a more optimistic position on the rise of a new Chinese identity in international society. For instance, Kun-hsuan Chiu and Wei-en Tan argue that the Chinese theory of the “harmonious world” reflects the fact that the Chinese identify themselves as a “junior power” or “late comer” in the international system. The Chinese perceive the need to cooperate with the United States in the interdependent international system. The harmony-oriented Chinese self-identification presents China with a more active role in traditional as well as human security issues based on the principle of equality and mutual-benefits. Chiu and Tan even allege that the harmonious world thesis has been deeply embedded in the value system of Chinese leaders following the rise of China’s comprehensive power in the international arena.¹⁶

The normative approach to study the rise of China can be found in Chen Mumin’s works. Chen indicates that the international society should help change the perception of the Chinese leaders on national security threats. If the Chinese leaders believe that the anti-Chinese security threats are diminishing, the Chinese will have stronger incentives to accommodate to international rules and norms. The highlight of China’s more positive perception of international participation was during the mid-1990s. This also coincided with softer policies toward Taiwan, as reflected in Jiang Zemin’s eight points of national unification released in January 1995.¹⁷

The combination of classical and constructivist approaches of power politics on the rise of China is also utilized by Yun-han Chu and Min-hua Huang in their work on the rise of China. Chu and Huang emphasize the conflicts and cooperation on ideas and culture, instead of power, as the central stage of Sino-American relations. They also presume the rationality of Chinese leaders in the reform era to revise the power or material-centered approaches to Chinese national security threats. Under such a logical inference, Chinese leaders tend to regard the “peaceful

tragedy?], in Tzongho Bao ed., *Guoji guanxi lilun [Theories of International relations]* (Taipei, Wunan, 2011): 389-416.

¹⁶ KunHsuan Chiu and Wei-en Tan, “Zhongguo hexieshijie waijiao zhengce zhi yanjiu” [A study on Chinese foreign policies of the harmonious world], in Kaihuang Yang ed., *Hu Jintao zhengquan zhi xu yu bian [The continuity and change of the Hu Jintao administration]* (Taipei, Wenjintang, 2007), 257-290.

¹⁷ Mumin Chen, “Dang heping jueqi yudao Taiwan wenti” [When the peaceful rise of China encounters the Taiwan Issue] *Zhongguo dalu yanjiu [Mainland China Studies]*, 49-4 (December 2006): 1-26.

evolution” strategies from the Western world as a clear and present threat than a power imbalance in the international system. Such theses, according to Chu and Huang, match the constructivist arguments that “identity comes before interests.” Hence, the Chinese solution to cope with the US threats is to search for China’s domestic cohesion to smash the “China Threat” attempts from abroad. By contrast, the US policies toward the rise of China are to attract Chinese intellectuals and elite groups with cultural diplomacy, and thus lead China towards integration with Western civilization.¹⁸

As to the analyses on Chinese participation in international regimes in the post Cold-war era, Taiwanese scholars tend to regard China as a system reformer, system maintainer, and system innovator. Although China still insists on the Westphalian tradition of national sovereignty, the actual behavior in the international arena reflects the Chinese intention to become a responsible major power.¹⁹ After analyzing the Chinese voting behavior as a member of the National Security Council of the United Nations from 1971 to 2005, Wen-cheng Lin concludes that China has gradually been socialized as a rational and responsible actor in international organizations. Lin explains China’s abstaining behavior as a strategic move to balance competing groups in the international organization. In order to balance the unilateral tendencies of American foreign policy, the Chinese have been forced to play a more active role in the global arena to consolidate national power.²⁰

China’s more active participation in non-traditional security affairs has also attracted the attention of academics. On the topic of global environmental politics, Ho-Ching Lee indicates that Chinese climate change diplomacy is rooted in the long-standing principle of Qitong Cunyi (求同存異, “approaching common ground and reconciling differences”). To China, engaging in a process of participation does not necessarily mean committing to any responsibilities; Chinese participation in the international environmental agreements does not equal a Chinese commitment on reducing emissions.²¹

¹⁸ Yunhan Chu and Minhua Huang, “Tansuo zhong guo jueqi de lilun yihan” [Exploring the theoretical implications on the rise of China], in Yunhan Chu and Qingguo Jia eds., *Cong guoji guanxi lilun kan zhongguo jueqi* [International relations theories and the rise of China] (Taipei, Wunan, 2007), 23-58.

¹⁹ Chaohsian Chiu, “Zhongguo jueqi de guoji zhidu canyu” [The rise of China and international participation] *Yuanjing Jikan* [Future China], 10-1 (January 2009): 135-180.

²⁰ Wencheng Lin, “Zhonggong zai lianhe guo anquan lishihui de toupiao fenxi, 1971-2005” [An Analysis of China’s voting behavior in NSC of UN, 1971-1005], *Wenti yu Yanjiu*, [Issues and Studies] 45-3 (May/June 2006): 1-38.

²¹ Ho Ching Lee, “China and the Climate change agreements: science, development and diplomacy” in Paul Harris, ed., *Confronting Environmental Change in East and Southeast Asia: Eco-Politics, Foreign Policy and Sustainable Development* (New York: United Nations Press,

Similar ideas on the Chinese rationality and pragmatism in international environmental affairs could be found in the literature of Taiwanese academics. To them, ideological factors play minor roles in determining China's policies toward environmental organization as China regains the status of a major power and consolidates confidence in the global system. For instance, Kuo-cheng Song argues that in the early stage of global environmental participation, China adopted a more defensive policy to resist outside intervention in its domestic economic policies. As China gradually accumulates confidence in economic development and environmental governance, it deems the compliance with international environmental norms an opportunity for domestic economic transition and innovation. Such pragmatism eventually leads to the change of Chinese foreign policy and domestic implementation of emission reduction.²² By the same token, Yi-ren Shi stresses Chinese pragmatism in international environmental negotiations. Although China regards itself as the leader of the developing world, adopting more cooperative instead of confrontational policies would help alleviate the global skepticism on the rise of China and attractive more foreign direct investments in environmental business.²³

3. Contending Aspects on the Rise of China among Chinese Academics

Chinese scholarly works on the rise of China are rich in theoretical approaches and policy implications. Pluralism still exists in an authoritarian system like China. One of the leading scholars Wang Jisi argues that the determinant factor on China's international position is domestic politics, instead of the change of relative power in the international system. With concern to national interests and relative power, China complies with the norms and regulations of international regimes. However, China does not have any intention to promote the "Beijing consensus" in international society. According to Wang, the self-identification of China in international society should be: (1) the most powerful developing country, however, China still lags behind the US, EU and Japan in terms of

2005), 135-1505.

²² Kuo-cheng Song, "Qihou lunshuquan: zhongguo yingdui qihou bianhua gongyue de lichang yu bianlun" [Climate theories: Chinese position and debates on climate change regimes] *Zhongguo dalu yanjiu* [Mainland China Studies], 54-3 (September 2011):1-32.

²³ Yiren Shih, "Zhongguo dalu dui quanqiu nuanhua wenti de yinying: huanjing zhengzhixue de guandian" [China's policies on global warming] *Zhengzhi xuebao* [Chinese Political Science Review], Vol.54 (2008): 139-164.

cultural, technological, and educational development; (2) an Asian power with global influences, however, China still does not play the leading role in Asia; (3) a socialist country with unique political and value systems, however, still in the transitional process, China is facing challenges of national unification and ethnic division; and (4) a beneficiary of international political system, but constrained by international regulations led by Western countries.²⁴

Wang also argues that Mao's 1956 speech about abandoning a "super power mindset" could still be applied to the current thought on Chinese foreign policy. According to Wang, given the tremendous power gap between China and the US, the lessons of Deng Xiaoping's Taoguang yanghui, yousuo zuowei (Hide brightness, nourish obscurity, and take appropriate actions, TYYZ) still carry important implications after the rise of China. Yousuo zuowei, or taking appropriate actions, must be linked with Taoguang yanghui. Otherwise, such actions only reflect ruthless or blunt behavior in international affairs. For Wang, those who adopt the attitude of Taoguang yanghui have a long-term plan and calculations. Taoguang yanghui implies modesty and prudence. This term does not imply passive or negative meanings. Moreover, Deng used this term to teach party comrades a lesson in accommodating to the changing situation—it is a kernel of "internal wisdom." It may elicit a negative impression if used in international propaganda. The TYYZ principle is often misunderstood by the outside world as a trick to hide Chinese intentions by pretending to take a low profile.

The middle ground theory between modest and more radical viewpoints on the rise of China is the argument of "creative intervention." For instance, Wang Yizhou regards China's abstaining from voting in international organizations as free riding and passive. As China becomes stronger and enhances comprehensive national power, a more active policy to take initiatives in international affairs is necessary to protect China's national interests. Such proactive intervention, however, is different from unilateral actions of direct military operation of the Western powers, especially the US. According to Wang, the Chinese way of creative intervention is characterized by respecting the targeted culture and public opinion of foreign countries. Instead of pursuing the status as a world police force, China needs to provide public goods in order to create a multiple-win situation in the region. Criticizing the deprived behavior of some Chinese enterprises overseas, Wang suggests China's social responsibility of creative intervention to promote local development and talent education in targeted areas of international society. Establishing the Confucius institutes is regarded as an instrument of creative inter-

²⁴ Jisi Wang, "Zhongguo de guoji dingwei wenti yu taoguang yanghui yousuo zuowei de zhanlyue si xiang" [China's international position and the strategic thought on Taoguan Yanghui Yousuo Zuowei] *Guoji wenti yanjiu* [International Studies], Vol. 2 (2011): 4-9.

vention of Chinese soft power to promote mutual understanding.²⁵

A more radical thought against TYYZ policies raises concerns about China's new international status. For instance, Yan Xuetong classifies two schools of thought on the rise of China. The mainstream school, according to Yan, insists on adhering to Deng Xiaoping's doctrine of maintaining a low profile in international diplomacy. According to Yan, the mainstream school argues that the calls from abroad for China to take on more international responsibility is a conspiracy by Western countries intended to exhaust China's economic resources by saddling it with more obligations. Yan argues that the Chinese behavior of abstaining from votes in the UN since the end of the Cold War is a reflection on such conservative thoughts on Chinese diplomacy. The second school, dubbed the traditional school by Yan, argues that China should focus instead on the country's traditional political thought, emphasizing the universal values of traditional Chinese philosophy. The traditional school also advocates taking on heavier international duties and argues that China should assume responsibility for world affairs consistent with its status as the world's second-largest economy, behind only that of the US.²⁶

Yan identifies himself as an advocate of the traditional school, with a unique explanation on traditional Chinese thought and its contemporary implications. Yan argues that if China wants to regain its historical status as a great world power, it must act like a great world power. Yan and his team draw inspirations from ancient Chinese philosophy, which regards both material capability and morality as necessary conditions for fostering strong and durable global leadership. For the sake of making itself a rising power that is welcomed by the rest of the world, China should act as a humane authority (Wang Dao王道), and take on more international responsibilities to improve its strategic credibility. Yan argues that the traditional Chinese values help Chinese leaders to make sense of the new emphasis on international responsibility and to channel China's policies in morally desirable ways.²⁷

Yan's explanation on the "moral factor" of traditional Chinese thought is functional and instrumental. Yan regards China's dispatch of warships and military

²⁵ Yizhou Wang, "Chuangzaoxing jieru tisheng zhongguo waijiao ruanshili" [Creative intervention enhances soft power of Chinese diplomacy], *Caijingjie* [Money China] (6 February 2012), at <<http://www.sis.pku.edu.cn/faculty/blue/article.aspx?userid=14&classid=4&id=516>> (searched date: April 11, 2013).

²⁶ Xuetong Yan, "The Source of Chinese Conducts," *Project Syndicate* (March 28, 2011), at <<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-source-of-chinese-conduct>> (searched date: April 11, 2013).

²⁷ Xuetong Yan, "How assertive should a great power be," *New York Times* (31 March 2011), at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/01/opinion/01iht-edyan01.html?_r=0> (searched date: April 11, 2013).

aircrafts to help evacuate Chinese nationals in Libya as an action out of moral consideration. It is consistent with Confucianism, which regards morality as the top priority of policy making, rather than Marxism, according to which economic interests alone drive the foreign policy. The Libyan case demonstrates, according to Yan, that Chinese foreign policy has shifted its focus from economic interests to moral and honorable duties. The traditional Chinese values of moral duties, happiness, and honor should replace the material and economy-centered foreign policy lines since China has become a major power in the international system.²⁸

The “Yan Xuetong school of thought” thus requests substantial policy adjustments after the rise of China. First of all, Yan argues that American unilateralism is the typical behavior of a hegemonic power, or Ba way (霸道), as traditional thought indicates. The Wang way (王道) will shoulder more international responsibilities instead of maximizing power. However, providing public goods to the international society must be based on the careful calculations of national interests. Secondly, the essence of the Chinese thought of Tianxia is openness and flexibility. China has opened its doors to the world, but the Western powers also need to open their doors to China and treat China on an equal basis; Thirdly, the bilateral relationship between China and US will be more confrontational than harmonious. Policies of “preventive cooperation” in the areas of high politics have to be instituted to avoid conflicts of the two major powers. Finally, the focuses of Chinese foreign policy have to be shifted from economic development to the rejuvenation of Chinese nationality, and from creating a harmonious international environment to promoting China’s honor and reputation abroad.²⁹

In addition to the more radical thoughts on Chinese assertiveness in international affairs, Chinese scholars have elaborated upon the notions of a culture shift and evolution of ideas. For instance, Zhu Feng argues that Chinese diplomacy after the rise of China should not be linked with the humiliating past of anti-foreign forces. The grand strategy of China is rooted in the evolution of domestic change and culture shift. However, Zhu argues that Chinese foreign policy making is always bounded by domestic extremism. The focal points for the smooth transition toward a major power are to expand domestic social capital toward international participation, and decrease the domestic costs of maintaining stability. According to Zhu, China should put first priority on idea innovation

²⁸ Xuetong Yan, (2011b).

²⁹ Xuetong Yan, “Jiejian xinqin sixiang chuangxin guoji guanxi lilun” [Using traditional thoughts to innovate international relation theories] *Guoji Zhengzhi Kexue* [International Political Science], No. 19(March, 2009): 150-165; Li Ying, “Jingzheng chengwei zhongmei guanxi zhuliou” [Competition is the main theme of Sino-American relations] *Guoji xinqin daobao* [International Herald Leader] (6 December 2010), at <<http://weihai.focus.cn/msgview/400500/202837314.html>> (searched date: April 11, 2013).

toward a rising China on the domestic front, followed by institutional innovation and capability enhancement.³⁰

Echoing the culture explanation on Chinese foreign policies, Qin Yaqing adopts a process-oriented approach on the cultural and civilization factors on the rise of China. To Qin, the formation of Chinese civilization is a process that incorporates different or even competing culture heritages and value systems. However, the process of culture and civilization formation are changing and adjusting continuously. They are “becoming” instead of “being” concepts.³¹ The rejuvenation of Chinese culture will provide more opportunities for convergence and interaction with the contemporary international system. Since contemporary Chinese culture is still in the process of “becoming,” there is no fixed interpretation for what Chinese culture is exactly. The rise of a new Chinese civilization will not lead to a “clash” as Samuel Huntington elaborated in his work.

The domestic interpretation of the rise of China and change of Chinese foreign policy are major concerns of the Chinese government as well as Chinese academics. As Chinese foreign minister Yang Jiemian indicates, the first task of Chinese foreign policy over the past decade has been to devote to domestic social and economic development. The fact that China is still a developing country remains unchanged. To ride this tide of strategic opportunity, the Chinese neither intend to isolate themselves, nor to sell out the Chinese model of development and serve as a mentor. Under such basic guidelines, the Chinese will participate actively in global governance and establish peace-loving images of the Chinese foreign policy.³²

The emphasis on the importance of domestic ideas in the context of Chinese as well as international history is reflected in Niu Jun’s work. According to Niu, the Chinese insistence on sovereignty independence and territorial integrity are the result of a revolutionary spirit and legitimacy. China’s foreign policies reflect the impact of domestic developmental and security changes. In the context of Sino-American relations, common strategy interests have only alleviated the confrontational relations from the early 1970s. It is the domestic politics of reform and development that normalize this unique relationship. Niu argues that by

³⁰ Feng Zhu, “Wei hu hexin liyi jidai waijiao dazhanlyue (Maintaining core interests need the rise of diplomatic grand strategy),” *Renmin Luntan* [People’s Tribune] (September 17, 2012): 30-31.

³¹ Yaqing Qin, “Wenhua, wenming yu shijie zhengzhi” [Culture, Civilization and world politics] *Shijie Zhengzhi* [World Politics], vol. 11(2011): 4-16.

³² Yang Jiechi, Records of press conference of foreign minister Yang Jiechi, March 6, 2012. at <<http://www.chinanews.com/shipin/2012/03-06/news58984.shtml>> (searched date: April 11, 2013).

reviewing the three thousand years of Chinese history, national unification can only be realized by a centralized authoritarian political system. Such a political system, in turn, becomes the major structural difference between China and the rest of the world. In brief, the Chinese identity toward the modern international system is the extension of a domestic national identity. The current Chinese political identity is closely linked with their revolutionary past and Cold War experiences. Niu thus stresses the importance of domestic change of competing social voices and their direct and indirect impacts on foreign policy making in the authoritarian system like that of China.³³

4. Cultural Instrumentalism, Political Power, and the Rise of China

As the preceding sections demonstrate, Chinese academics do try to search for a new paradigm to explain the rise of China in the era of globalization. Domestic shifts of ideas, along with the continuity and change of Chinese culture, provide a useful road map to explain China's behavior in the context of a peaceful development.

Culture serves as the base of norms and a value system of foreign relations. It is also an instrument to perform certain functions in domestic as well as international politics. The Chinese government indicates that the peaceful development of China is based on its cultural tradition, economic globalization, and changes in the international security environment. In a white paper on China's Peaceful Development released by the State Council in 2011, the Chinese government argues:

“The Chinese people have always cherished a world view of “unity without uniformity,” “harmony between man and nature,” and “harmony is invaluable.” This belief calls for the fostering of harmonious family bond, neighborhood harmony and good interpersonal relationships. Under the influence of the culture of harmony, peace-loving has been deeply ingrained in the Chinese character.”³⁴

It seems that the official line of the Chinese government presumes that Chinese culture is unitary and coherent. The Chinese government stresses the harmonious

³³ Jun Niu, “Lun zhonghua renmin gongheguo duiwai guanxi zhi jingxian” [The meridian of Chinese foreign relations] *Waijiao Pinglun* [Foreign Affairs Review], Vol. 3(2010): 59-73.

³⁴ State Council Information Office, *China's Peaceful Development* (Beijing: State Council Information Office of People's Republic of China, 2011).

part of the culture, and uses it as a glue to achieve domestic unity. In addition to nationalism, the Chinese government tries to integrate traditional culture with the socialist ideology as the basis of regime legitimacy. Hu Jintao indicated in the 18th Party Congress Report:

“... We must create a new surge in promoting socialist culture and bring about its great development and enrichment, increase China’s cultural soft power, and enable culture to guide social trends, educate the people, serve society, and boost development....

... We should continue to adapt Marxism to China’s conditions in keeping up with the times and increase its appeal to the people.”³⁵

Furthermore, to alleviate the international skepticism on the rise of China, the Chinese government utilizes the rejuvenation of traditional Chinese culture as a useful tool to improve its international image. The Chinese government also promotes culture as a bridge to link Chinese domestic dynamics with economic globalization. At the same time, the Chinese government endeavors to integrate market forces to transfer the traditional culture into culture and creative business. As the 18th Party Congress report indicates:

“.....The strength and international competitiveness of Chinese culture are an important indicator of China’s power and prosperity and the renewal of the Chinese nation. We should invigorate state-owned non-profit cultural institutions, improve corporate governance of profit-oriented cultural entities, and create a thriving cultural market. We should open the cultural sector wider to the outside world and draw on cultural achievements of other countries. We should foster a fine environment that enables a large number of talented cultural figures, particularly eminent cultural figures and representatives of Chinese culture, to distinguish themselves in artistic pursuit. We should honor cultural personalities with outstanding contribution.”³⁶

Culture industry has been utilized by the Chinese government as a useful tool to link market values and expand international influences—the so-called Chinese soft power. According to the statistics of the Chinese Ministry of Culture, the Chinese cultural business contributes only 4 percent of the global market share, while the US, EU, Japan and South Korea shares are 43, 34, 10 and 5 percent respectively. Such a weak performance does not match China’s status as the world’s second

³⁵ Xin Hua News Agency, “Full text of Hu Jintao's report at 18th Party Congress” *Xin Hua News Agency* (November 17, 2012), at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/special/18cpcnc/2012-11/17/c_131981259.htm> (searched date: April 11, 2013).

³⁶ Xin Hua News Agency (2012).

ranked economic power. As shown in China's first Soft Power Blue Book, the basic situation of a "Strong West, Weak East" in an international cultural context has remained the same in the past decade. The Chinese government thus pushes hard to grasp the "voice power" in the global setting to resist the Western domination of the international mass communication channels. China also argues that cultural soft power must be backed up by an economic and military "hard power."³⁷

The rise of China's cultural power is closely related to the domestic restructuring of its cultural bureaucracies. The Chinese analysts argue that the government's efforts to break down the Western monopoly over the international cultural system have to be buttressed by cultural diversity on domestic soil. Enhancement of international soft power is rooted in domestic reform of the cultural sector.³⁸ At the central government level, Chinese culture governance suffers the struggles of vertical and horizontal coordination, namely the Tiaotiao and Kuaikuai, in the bureaucratic setting. Lack of coordination among competing governmental sectors leads to the fragmentation of policy innovation and implementation. These culture-bound bureaucracies include the CCP Propaganda Department, Ministry of Culture Affairs, Broadcast and TV General Bureau, Press and Publication Agency, Press Office of the State Council, Ministry of Commerce, National Commission of Development and Reform, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Chinese government has promoted the reform of corporatization of state cultural sectors since the period of the eleventh Five Year Plan. Over time, large state-owned cultural enterprise groups have emerged.

The Chinese government also attaches great importance to cultural factors in its Taiwan policy. In the 18th Party Congress report, Hu indicated that:

"We should expand cultural exchanges to enhance a common sense of national identity. We should encourage the compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Straits to unite and pursue a common endeavor. The compatriots on both sides belong to the same Chinese nation and form a community of common destiny bound by blood ties."³⁹

However, cultural exchanges must be based on the unchanged principle of

³⁷ Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe [Publishing House of China's Social Science], *Zhongguo Ruanshili Lanpishu [The Blue Paper on China's soft power]* (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe [Publishing House of China's Social Science], 2011).

³⁸ Qixue Zhang, "Zai duiwai jiaoliuzhong qieshi weihu guojia wenhua anquan" [Protecting cultural security while promoting international cultural interaction] *Guangming Ribao [Guangming Daily]* (April 11, 2012).

³⁹ Xin Hua News Agency (2012).

One China and national unification. Cultural exchange is aimed at facilitating the process of peaceful reunification:

“Although the mainland and Taiwan are yet to be reunified, the fact that both belong to one China has never changed. China’s territory and sovereignty have always been indivisible and no division will be tolerated. The two sides of the Taiwan Straits should uphold the common stand of opposing Taiwan independence and of following the 1992 Consensus. Both sides should increase their common commitment to upholding the one-China framework and, on this basis, expand common ground and set aside differences.”

Sun Yafu, the Deputy Director of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, indicates that promoting cross-Taiwan Strait relations must be based on cultural dynamics. Economic and cultural development must reach a balance. Promoting the common culture will serve as a spiritual linkage to enhance common identity, and thus realize the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.⁴⁰ More moderate Chinese experts notice the differences between Chinese and Taiwanese culture due to their different historical paths over the past decades. These differences are rooted in political struggles since 1949 across the Taiwan Strait. Basic values of traditional culture are shared by both mainland China and Taiwan, but the mainland should not jump to conclusions about the omnipotence of the culture power in promoting unification.⁴¹

The hard-liners’ aspects of the cultural explanation of cross-Strait relations could be found in the work of Xin Qi.⁴² His major points are also echoed by like-minded Chinese experts on cross-Strait relations. Xin’s explanation of Chinese culture is closely linked with political functions of national unification. Xin puts national unification as one of the core traditional cultural values in Chinese history. According to Xin, most of the heroes in Chinese history were those who fought for national unification. National unification is the pre-condition for harmonious development across the Taiwan Strait. The contingent and moderate policies adopted by the Chinese government are to promote national unification, instead of solidifying the status quo across the Taiwan Strait.

⁴⁰ Yafu Sun, “Liangyan guanxi heping fazhan ying bansui zhonghua wenhua dafayang” [Cross-Strait relations must be based on glorifying Chinese culture], *Taiwan Affairs Office*, (January 19, 2011), at <http://big5.gwyttb.gov.cn/newsb/201101/t20110124_1729871.htm> (searched date: April 11, 2013).

⁴¹ Xintian Yu, “Liangyan guanxi zhongde wenhua renshi wenti” [Cultural understanding in cross-Strait relations] *Taiwan Yanjiu* [*Taiwan Studies*], (January 2010):1-6.

⁴² Xin Qi is currently holding many Taiwan-related positions, including the Chairman of Association of Promoting Chinese Culture. He is regarded as one of the main supporters of the hard line of cross-Strait relations.

Xin's culture theory is the extension of his power-centered approach to cross-Strait relations. Against the current tide of re-evaluating republican (Minguo, 民國) cultural legacies on mainland China, Xin devalues the humanitarian tradition of the May Fourth and Minguo period. To Xin, in order to refine Chinese culture, great efforts must be made to integrate traditional heritage with Marxism and Mao Zedong thoughts. Xin emphasizes the spillover effects of Chinese culture to the surrounding East Asian region. To Xin, if China does not promote or refresh its own culture, Chinese traditional heritage will be "stolen" by neighboring countries.

The power-centered cultural theory has specific implications for cross-Strait relations. Xin judges that regardless of political differences, Chinese nationality identification on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait remains unchanged. In terms of respecting Taiwan's public opinion on independence and unification, Xin argues that the public opinion of 1.3 billion people on the mainland will outnumber the 23 million who make up the population of Taiwan. The reality of the Taiwan Strait, Xin emphasizes, is the large gaps in GDP and diplomatic recognition between Taiwan and the mainland. According to Chinese cultural tradition, the PRC is the "main legitimacy" while the ROC is a "subordinate legitimacy". The subordinate regime enjoys some administration power in specific regions, but the ownership and sovereignty of China remain unchanged. The tolerance of the main legitimate regime, as seen in the current PRC policies toward Taiwan, reflects the inclusiveness of traditional Chinese culture based on the motherland. Based on a common culture and national interests, the two sides of the Taiwan Strait should resist the intervention of foreign forces into the domestic affairs of the Chinese nation.⁴³

In the context of cross-Strait relations, the Taiwanese president Ma Ying-jeou's cultural statements could be understood from two main aspects. Ma argues that Taiwan will be the standard-bearer at the leading edge of Chinese culture. Among all the ethnically Chinese societies, Confucian values are practiced more widely and more seriously in Taiwan than anywhere else. The implication is that in terms of Chinese culture, Taiwan plays the legitimate role in maintaining and renewing the traditional value system of Chinese culture. Chinese culture provides opportunities for the two sides to delve into traditional insights of co-existence. As Ma argued in his second inaugural address:

"In light of our common Chinese heritage, people on both sides should do their utmost to jointly contribute to the international community without engaging in

⁴³ Qi Xin, "Hongyang zhonghua wenhua chuantong, chixu tuidong liangan guanxi heping fazhan" [Maintain Chinese cultural tradition, continue to promote peaceful development across the Taiwan Strait] *Zhongguo Pinglun* [China Review], Vol. 178 (October, 2012): 20-24.

vicious competition and the waste of resources. I firmly believe that Taiwan and mainland China are open minded enough to find a way to attain peace and co-prosperity.”⁴⁴

Ma's cultural statements demonstrate the instrumentalism of culture in cross-Strait relations. However, Ma stresses that Taiwan is the real successor of traditional Chinese culture. The “cultural legitimacy” also narrows the power gap between the mainland and Taiwan. The traditional wisdom of Chinese culture could be utilized to create a win-win situation of co-existence, but the relationship of the two sides must be based on equal footing. In other words, Chinese culture is developed by the Ma administration to enhance, instead of weaken, Taiwan's cultural supremacy when faced with the rise of China. The Taiwanese Culture Minister Lung Ying-tai also indicated in a speech at George Washington University that Taiwan provides an alternative and unique cultural option for the world with its democratic experiences. Lung expressed her hope that China will learn to acknowledge Taiwan's freedom of thought and expression and adopt a softer position toward global society and to its people.⁴⁵

The pro-Taiwan independence experts argue that the culture factor explains the difference, instead of integration, between China and Taiwan. Chinese culture is just one of the several major components of contemporary Taiwanese culture which incorporates Japanese, American, and indigenous heritages. Equating Taiwanese culture with Chinese culture was socially constructed during the KMT rule of the authoritarian era. Such efforts do not reflect the current situation in Taiwan.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the veteran independence supporter Gu Kuanmin introduces the traditional Chinese concept of brotherhood to describe current cross-Strait relations. Gu argues that since Chinese culture stresses that the elder brother should take care of his younger sibling, China should recognize Taiwan as an independent country and help Taiwan join the United Nations. In return, Taiwan will keep a close relationship with China based on brotherhood, and promises not to join any anti-China alliances in the world.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Yingjeou Ma, Ma Yingjeou's inaugural speech, *Radio Taiwan International* (May 20, 2012). At <http://news.rti.org.tw/index_newsContent.aspx?nid=355979> (searched date: April 11, 2013).

⁴⁵ “Soft Power in Hard Times: Minister Lung's DC speech emphasizes Taiwan's civil culture and right of international participation,” Press Release, Ministry of Culture, August 29, 2012.

⁴⁶ Canhong Zhang, “Wenhua: taiwan shehui de xindongneng” [Culture: new dynamics of Taiwanese Society] *World United Formosans for Independence* (5 June 2012), At <<http://www.wufi.org.tw/%E6%96%87%E5%8C%96%E5%8F%B0%E7%81%A3%E7%A4%BE%E6%9C%83%E7%9A%84%E6%96%B0%E5%8B%95%E8%83%BD/>> (searched date: April 11, 2013).

⁴⁷ Kuanmin Ku, “Xiongdi zhibang: zhongguo zengci yu liangan guanxi chuyi” [Nations of

Other Taiwanese experts also criticize Ma Ying-jeou's soft-power arguments and culture-based approaches toward China. Lin Cheng-yi, for example, postulates that the soft power must be based on hard power. The one-China precondition limits Taiwan's space for maneuvering or employing hard power. Such a retreat will eventually invalidate the utilities of soft power and cultural diplomacy. Michael Hsiao and Yang Hao also indicate that China's Confucius institutions carry political, rather than cultural, purposes of international interactions. Such plans will weaken China's public diplomacy and eventually create negative effects on China's image building.⁴⁸

Conclusion

The preceding analyses demonstrate the utilities of political realism in analyzing China's rise in the era of globalization. Given China's unique historical path of development, the realist tradition of international relations needs further revision and adjustments to suit the Chinese case. The Chinese interpretation of socialist ideology is based on political pragmatism instead of moral crusading. In the era of reform and globalization, Chinese foreign policy is used to promote domestic reform and development. This inside-out explanation carries analytical importance in explaining Chinese external behavior after China regained its international status and reputation.

The major puzzle is the utilities of Chinese history and culture in interpreting current and future Chinese foreign policy tendencies. The instrumentalism of culture and history, as demonstrated in this paper, challenges the argument that the traditional harmonious culture will lead to a softer Chinese policy abroad. The central kingdom mindset along with the humiliation mentality collectively create the historical basis of contemporary Chinese foreign relations. Such complexity creates uncertainties and anxiety in neighboring countries, including Taiwan.

The Taiwanese are facing a rising China with caution and prudence. Economic globalization links Taiwan with the mainland in the global value chain of

brotherhood: A preliminary suggestion on cross Strait relations] *Xintaiwan Guoce Zhiku* [Taiwan Brain Trust], (October 29, 2012), at <http://traaworld.blogspot.tw/2012/10/blog-post_29.html> (searched date: April 11, 2013).

⁴⁸ Chengli Lin, "Dongya jushi yu taiwan yinying (East Asian situation and Taiwan's policies)," *New Taiwan Think Tank* (July 19, 2012), at <http://www.braintrust.tw/article_detail/1225> (searched date: 11 April 2013); Michael Hsiao and Hao Yang, "Confucius Institutes and the Question of China's Soft Power Diplomacy," *China Brief*, 12-13 (July 2012), at <http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=39592&cHash=ccbda5a33d17f73e50a7a3d92be5233b> (searched date: April 11, 2013).

manufacturing networks. Taiwan also tries to explore culture as the foundation for cross-Strait peace and development. However, the center-periphery mentality of the Chinese side makes cross-Strait negotiations on an equal footing less likely. Moreover, the Taiwanese academics, as introduced in this paper, pay less attention to understanding the plural ideas within China on competition policy lines toward the peaceful rise. Academic works tend to use Western theories and logic to study short-term foreign policy output on the mainland. Studying the value change in the Chinese domestic logic will help us understand the historical evolution of change and continuity in foreign policy making, and enhance explanation utilities in the era of cultural shift and regime consolidation.

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